

Mon Jan 19 2026 11:29:08 GMT+0900 (日本標準時)

## Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

# INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE CINEMA 1

<b>Subtitle</b>	A History of Film in Japan
<b>Lecturer(s)</b>	MES, THOMAS P.
<b>Credit(s)</b>	2
<b>Academic Year/Semester</b>	2026 Spring
<b>Day/Period</b>	Thu.3
<b>Campus</b>	Mita
<b>Classroom</b>	443
<b>Class Format</b>	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
<b>Registration Number</b>	44898
<b>Faculty/Graduate School</b>	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
<b>Year Level</b>	2, 3, 4
<b>Grade Type</b>	S, A, B, C, D
<b>Course Description</b>	A course to aim to learn the origins of cinema in Japan and its development up to the present day by developing the knowledge of the course topic.
<b>K-Number</b>	CIN-CO-00123-212-01

[▼ Detail](#)

### Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

This course explores the origins of cinema in Japan and its development up to the present day. It will look into cultural influences that shaped approaches to filmmaking as well as narrative conventions and genres. We will also investigate how Japanese films have shaped foreign views of Japan and Japanese culture. Particular attention will be paid to issues and problems of film study in relation to cinema from Japan, including the construction of the “Japaneseness” of Japanese films.

Goals:

To develop knowledge of the course topic (Film in Japan) and the research and debates that have been central to it.

To develop general skills in the critical reading of and reflecting on academic texts.

To apply these skills to the course topic in the shape of analytical papers, including on films viewed in class.

### Course Taught by Faculty Member with Professional Experience

Not applicable

### Active Learning Methods [Description](#)

Not applicable

### Preparatory Study

The students are recommended to read the assigned texts AFTER each week's class.

## Course Plan

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### Lesson 1

#### Japan and its cinema, through Western eyes

Incl. introduction, course structure and scheduling

Required reading: Yoshimoto

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### Lesson 2

**FILM SCREENING:** *Rashomon* (*Rashōmon*, dir: Kurosawa Akira, 1950)

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### Lesson 3

*Rashomon* in the thicket of geopolitics

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### Lesson 4

#### The beginnings of cinema: the sound of silent movies

Required reading: Gerow

Recommended viewing: *A Page of Madness* (*Kurutta ippeiji*, director: Kinugasa Teinosuke, 1928)

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### Lesson 5

#### Sound, modernism, and the first Golden Age

Required reading: Wada-Marciano (1)

Recommended viewing: *Mr. Thank You* (*Arigatō-san*, director: Shimizu Hiroshi, 1936)

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### Lesson 6

#### Cinema in war and occupation

Required reading: Hirano

Recommended viewings:

*China Night* (*Shina no yoru*, director: Fushimizu Osamu, 1940)

*No Regrets for Our Youth* (*Waga seishun ni kuinashi*, regie: Kurosawa Akira, 1946)

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### Lesson 7

#### Ozu and Naruse: masters of the everyday

Required readings: Bordwell, Russell

Recommended viewing:

*An Autumn Afternoon* (*Sanma no aji*, director: Ozu Yasujirō, 1963)

*When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* (*Onna ga kaidan o noboru toki*, director: Naruse Mikio, 1960)

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### Lesson 8

#### Kurosawa and Mizoguchi: masters of the historical drama

Required readings: Prince, Mellen

Recommended viewing:

*Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no samurai*, director: Kurosawa Akira, 1954)

*The Life of Oharu* (*Saikaku ichidai no onna*, director: Mizoguchi Kenji, 1952)

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### Lesson 9

#### Yakuza, samurai, and Japanese cowboys: the genre films of the studio era

Required reading: Schrader

Recommended viewing: *Tokyo Drifter* (*Tokyo nagaremono*, director: Suzuki Seijun, 1965)

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### Lesson 10

**“Nūberu bāgu”: young and angry in the 1960s**

Required reading: Desser

Recommended viewing: *The Sun's Burial (Taiyō no hakaba, regie: Ōshima Nagisa, 1960)***Lesson 11****New genres and the fall of the studios**

Required reading: Zahlten

Recommended viewing: *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun (Sērāfuku to kikanjū, director: Sōmai Shinji, 1981)***Lesson 12****Another new wave? The West's "rediscovery" of Japanese cinema (1989-2004)**

Required reading: Mes

Recommended viewing: *Maborosi (Maboroshi no hikari, director: Koreeda Hirokazu, 1995)***Lesson 13****Japanese cinema in the digital age**

Required reading: Wada-Marciano (2)

Recommended viewing: *The Stranger from Afar (Marebito, director: Shimizu Takashi, 2004)***Lesson 14****The long road: female filmmakers in Japan**

Required reading: Saito

Recommended viewing: *Forever a Woman (Chibusa yo eien nare, director: Tanaka Kinuyō, 1955)***Other**

Any additions to the syllabus will be communicated during the first class.

**Method of Evaluation**

The course will contain three assignments: **one mid-term paper** based on the film viewed in class (Rashomon), **creating a research question** for your final term paper and **the final term paper** on a topic of your choosing related to the course.

You will be graded for each of the papers. Your final grade for the course will then be decided in the following manner:

Mid-term paper: 35%

Research question: 15%

Final paper grade: 50%

To pass this class, you need to have submitted ALL three assignments!

All deadlines will be communicated during the first class.

**Generative AI Policy for Classes**

This course permits use of generative AI. Specifically, it may be used in the following situations:

Assistance in brainstorming and conceptualizing for a project

Reviewing and planning how to structure assignments

Supplementing the research process (students must verify the accuracy of any information themselves)

Students must also take note of the following points:

When AI was used for an assignment, students must indicate such on their submission (e.g., "I used Gemini to help draft my outline").

Copying text generated by AI without proper attribution, or using information from unverified sources, may be

considered academic misconduct.

When writing reports or assignments, students are expected to think independently and AI is not allowed.

## Textbooks

None. All required readings will be shared as pdf files through K-LMS.

## Reference Books

These readings will be available through K-LMS:

David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 31-50

David Desser, *Eros Plus Massacre*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 39-57

A.A. Gerow, "The Benshi's New Face: Defining Cinema in Taishō Japan", *Iconics* 3 (1994), pp. 69-86

Kyoko Hirano, "The Occupation and Japanese Cinema", *The Occupation of Japan: Arts and Culture*, ed. Thomas W. Burkman. Norfolk, 1988, pp. 142-153

Joan Mellen, "History through Cinema: Mizoguchi Kenji's *The Life of Oharu* (1952)", *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*, eds. Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 90-101

Tom Mes, "V-Cinema: How Home Video Revitalized Japanese Film and Mystified Film Historians", *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. Alisa Freedman and Toby Slade. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017, pp. 216-226

Stephen Prince, *The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 3-31

Catherine Russell, "From women's writing to women's films in 1950s Japan: Hayashi Fumiko and Naruse Mikio", *Asian Journal of Communication*

## Lecturer's Comments to Students

This is a lecture course.

Class format for this course is FACE-TO-FACE.

All class materials and feedback on assignments will be supplied through K-LMS.

## Question/Comments

Dr. Tom Mes (t.mes@keio.jp)